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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000641

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [EAIR](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [UNSC](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: SLEIMAN SAYS ARMY DOING ITS BEST TO
PREVENT MILITIA ACTIVITY; JUMBLATT RESOLVE IS FIRM

REF: A. BEIRUT 635

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 640
[1](#)C. BEIRUT 618

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Commander Michel Sleiman said the LAF is doing its best to prevent militia activity, while expressing concern for the safety of the Lebanese people. March 14/Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt, from his residence in Clemenceau, told the Charge at 1700 on May 9 about a proposal shared with him by an Amal deputy calling for Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's resignation and a freeze on the Cabinet's May 5 decisions (to transfer the head of airport security after reports of Hizballah-placed surveillance cameras at the airport and declare Hizballah's fiber optics network illegal). Jumblatt said he opposed the call for Siniora to resign, and passed the message to March 14/Future Movement leader Saad Hariri, who had not yet responded. Hizballah is expected to move into the Druze area (Shouf mountains) tonight. End summary.

SLEIMAN: LAF DOING ITS BEST
TO PREVENT MILITIA ACTIVITY

[1](#)2. (C) At 1800 on May 9, the Charge called Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Commander Michel Sleiman. She underlined that the U.S. fully supports the government headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and the institutions of the state of Lebanon. The LAF is one of the key institutions of the state, she continued. It is important for the people of Lebanon that the army carry out its duties to protect the institutions of the state including the government, Prime Minister Siniora and his Cabinet, and the citizens of Lebanon.

[1](#)3. (C) Sleiman replied, "We are worried about the situation. I've given orders to prevent incidents, but we didn't deploy sufficient troops to defend the city. We didn't send enough units in to control the situation inside the city or on the roads. We are doing our best to prevent all militia activity. I am concerned about the Sunnis and the Shia."

[1](#)4. (C) The Charge told Sleiman that she knew that, he, as an LAF officer with nearly four decades of service protecting

Lebanon, realized the Lebanese people looked to him and the army for their country's future. She asked Sleiman about rumors that there might be a curfew declared that evening. He said there would be no declaration of a curfew, "at least not a legal one," but added that he would continue to send patrols out to protect the people. The Charge and Sleiman agreed to stay in touch.

JUMBLATT REMAINS FIRM

15. (C) The Charge spoke to March 14/Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) leader Walid Jumblatt at 1700 on May 9. He confirmed that he is still at his residence in Clemenceau (Ref A) and that he was theoretically "being protected" by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), but noted that Hizballah has surrounded the LAF perimeter.

16. (C) The Charge mentioned that Druze MP Wael Abu Faour had told us earlier this afternoon that the head of Hizballah security Wafiq Safa had reportedly contacted Wissam Hassan, the director of Internal Security Forces (ISF) intelligence, and conveyed to Hassan a proposal to solve the current crisis. The Charge inquired about the proposal, saying that the rumor on the street was that the proposal called for Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to resign (Ref B), followed by the formation of an interim government which would go to the National Dialogue table.

17. (C) Jumblatt acknowledged that they had been contacted about a proposal, but not from Hizballah. He said that Amal deputy Ali Hassan Khalil had sent a message to Jumblatt,

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telling him that the proposal was for the LAF to send a letter to the government asking it to freeze its decision on "transferred" Brigadier General Wafiq Choucair, as well as its decision to declare Hizballah's fiber optics network illegal (Ref C).

18. (C) Jumblatt said he passed this message to March 14/Future Movement leader Saad Hariri about two hours earlier and was waiting for a response. Jumblatt said he had already conveyed to his March 14 colleagues that it would be a "big mistake" for PM Siniora to resign and that he is dead set against it. He added, it would be a bad compromise; no compromise should be made. In response to the Charge's inquiry as to what the USG can do, Jumblatt replied that continued USG support to the government was helpful.

HIZBALLAH EXPECTED IN
DRUZE-POPULATED MOUNTAINS TONIGHT

19. (C) Ahmed Mousali, member of the National Dialogue party from the opposition, told us that Hizballah will move to the Druze-populated areas in the Shouf and Aley tonight. We asked Druze MP Wael Abu Faour about this; he said that in the area, Triple 8, near Aley, has already seen some fighting. Jumblatt warning his fellow Druze to avoid the area. Also, two people from former minister Talal Arslan's party were killed in clashes with Jumblatt's PSP today.

SISON